

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 260
By McNally

A RESOLUTION to designate the Sunday falling during National Fire Prevention Week in October as "Firefighters' Memorial Day" in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, on October 9, 1871, the Great Chicago Fire killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures, and burned more than 2,000 acres in 27 hours; and

WHEREAS, in 1920, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first National Fire Prevention Day proclamation, and since 1922, National Fire Prevention Week has been observed during the week in which October 9 falls on the calendar. In addition, the President of the United States has signed a proclamation pronouncing a day of national observance during that week every year since 1925; and

WHEREAS, firefighters are dedicated to raising public awareness about fire prevention measures and the dangers of fire. Tennessee's firefighters teach schoolchildren and motivate the public to practice fire safety through fire drills and seminars; and

WHEREAS, according to a report by the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association, 112 on-duty firefighter fatalities occurred in 1999, marking the highest annual U.S. firefighter death toll since 1989 (118), a record since eclipsed by the events of September 11, 2001. The report cites an increase of 21 deaths from 1998, and also indicates that stress and overexertion, usually resulting in a heart attack, continue to be the leading cause of fatal injury for on-duty U.S. firefighters; and

WHEREAS, four Tennessee firefighters died in the line of duty in 2002, and the State averages between two and three such in-line-of-duty fatalities each year; and

WHEREAS, although on-duty firefighter fatalities have declined over the past two decades, the rate of deaths per million structure fires has decreased very little, and the rate of deaths in collisions per million structure fires while responding to alarms has more than doubled; and

WHEREAS, smoke and poisonous gasses are the leading causes of death in fires and can kill a person long before the fire itself; underestimating the power of fire and the time it takes to escape a home or workplace after a fire ignites causes unnecessary loss of life; and

WHEREAS, developing a home escape plan requires everyone in the household knowing two ways out of each room, having an outdoor location in front of the home where everyone will meet upon exiting, and memorizing the local fire department's telephone number or 911; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee's fire departments are dedicated to ensuring the safety of life and property from the devastating effects of fire and are joined by the concerned citizens and government officials of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of those brave men and women who have put their lives on the line while fighting fires and those who have lost that battle in order to save and protect their fellow citizens, the State of Tennessee is proud to take a moment to remember and honor those heroes; and

WHEREAS, the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and on the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., bring into sharp focus the degree to which firefighters place their lives on the line to protect their fellow citizens; the toll on New York area firefighters alone in the September 11 attack is in excess of the average national fatalities for the past three years; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Tennessee are now keenly aware of the courage and commitment of this State's over 30,000 firefighters in 670 full-time and volunteer departments, who are called to save lives and treat the injured during fires and other catastrophic events; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that this nation's firefighters who have dedicated their lives to the safety of others, and those who have given their lives in this noble cause, be recognized and remembered for the accomplishment of their high purposes; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby designate the Sunday which falls during National Fire Prevention Week in October of each year as "Firefighters' Memorial Day" in Tennessee, in honor of the brave and valiant service rendered by the courageous and dedicated firefighters throughout this State.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.